

**Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge Complex  
Comprehensive Conservation Plan**

## **Issue Fact Sheet**

### **The Issue: Potter's Marsh Blind Management Zone**

**Background:** Since 1980, the Savanna District has conducted a lottery drawing for waterfowl hunting blind sites on 1,830 acres of Potter's Marsh in Pool 13. Applicants pay a \$10 non-refundable application fee, and successful applicants pay an additional \$75 fee for the 49 blind sites. Applicants construct blinds for the season using materials in the guidelines provided. See attached brochure for details on the application/drawing process.

This highly controlled hunt is very popular. Over 500 persons apply for a blind permit annually. In 2002, hunter bag checks throughout the Savanna District showed parties using the Potter's Marsh blinds averaged 3.8 birds/day versus 2.9 birds/day on other areas in Pool 13.

### **Main Concerns:**

1. Managing the hunt requires considerable staff time to answer inquiries, accept applications, collect and process fees, conduct two drawings, inspect blinds for compliance and area posting. See attached list of all duties required by staff.
2. This hunt requires more than 300 hours of staff time, annually, to administer; time which is taken away from resource management programs. No other single program on the District requires this amount of time to administer; and results in no benefit to the resource.
3. The fees collected do not cover the total expenses incurred for administering and managing the hunt due to the amount of staff time required. Additionally, under a new policy in 2003, only 80% of fees will be returned to the Refuge, as compared to 100% returned in previous years.
4. The random drawing process has been manipulated to the point that it is no longer an equal opportunity program. Some hunting parties get the same blind year after year.
5. Hunting opportunity for the general public is limited due to only 49 blinds available on 1,830 acres. The area can accommodate a maximum of 196 hunters on any given day due to the blind system which is below public demand.